OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
NUMBER AND MISERY
OF THE
POOR;
ON THE
HEAVY RATES LEVIED FOR THEIR MAINTENANCE;
AND, ON
THE GENERAL CAUSES OF POVERTY;
INCLUDING
SOME CURSORY HINTS,
FOR THE RADICAL CURE OF THESE GROWING EVILS.
HUMBLY SUBMITTED TO
PUBLIC CONSIDERATION.

Who first taught Souls enslav'd, and Realms undone,
Th' enormous faith of Many made for One. POPE.

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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

NUMBER and MISERY

OF THE

POOR, &c.

TO an entire ſtranger to the interior conſtitution of this iſland, it would furniſh juſt cauſe for amazement, to find a ſtate, conſidered collectively, really claiming a comparative, if not a real excellence; a ſtate, the land of which is cultivated ſo as on a general view to have been compared to one vaſt garden; a ſtate, the members of which ſeem all induſtriouſly active in agriculture, manufactures and commerce; a ſtate excelling in all the arts of civil ſociety; apparently flouriſhing at home, and really reſpectable abroad:—What would a ſtranger ſay, to find a people exhibiting ſuch a diſtinguiſhed external appearance of proſperity, yet, at the very ſame time, their ſtreets ſwarming with wretched objects expoſed to all the

horrors of want and miſery; their roads infeſted with lawleſs miſcreants to the terror of innocent travellers; their pariſhes groaning under a burden of poor creatures crammed together in places miſcalled workhouſes, where they linger out an indolent naſty exiſtence: Their numbers increaſing yearly to ſuch a degree, that it has long engaged the attention of the legiſlature, and exerciſed the ingenuity of individuals, hitherto in vain, to find a remedy adequate to ſo deplorable a political diſorder!

Such a repreſentation would ſcarcely obtain credit, had we not too ſenſible evidences of its reality in the heavy rates yearly collected for the ſubſiſtence of the Pariſh-Poor; in the importunity we meet with, and in the violence we frequently ſuſtain, in the public highways.

The inſufficiency of theſe rates for the purpoſe of maintaining the Poor, is no leſs notorious than their being rendered ſtill more ſo by the many litigations between pariſhes on removals, and diſputed ſettlements, and by other miſapplications of them. Pariſh feaſts are become proverbial; and the obligation of executing pariſh offices, call tradeſmen, whoſe time is equivalent to money, ſo much out of their reſpective occupations, that men, whoſe attention is wholly bent on profit, may well be ſuppoſed to take all favourable opportunities of indemnifying themſelves for ſuch diſagreeable trouble. Accordingly we find ſome men in every pariſh, of more addreſs and fewer ſcruples than their neighbours, contract a fondneſs for pariſh buſineſs, and puſh themſelves into it in ſo ſuſpicious a manner, as to render themſelves odious to the pariſhioners. Such men inſinuate themſelves into the management of pariſh money, form ſchemes for frequent diſburſements, bring the pariſh in debt, die rich unaccountably; and to quiet the reproaches of a certain internal troubleſome monitor, to make their

peace

peace with heaven and the poor, and to white-wash their reputation after death, leave donations to hospitals, and perhaps add twelve two-penny loaves to be given to the poor every Sunday morning after divine service, on their tombs; which, during sermon time, are to stand in goodly array on a shelf in the view of the whole congregation, while the names and benefactions are recorded in gold letters, handsomely framed, under the organ-loft.

The parishioners all this while find their poor increase upon their hands, and the great sums of money collected, insufficient to maintain them even in the miserable manner they are subsisted. The governor of the work-house always complaining, and if he be well with the justices and leading churchwarden, often getting *extra* grants; while universal discontents distract their vestry meetings: and in short, to compare little things with great, as like causes will always produce like effects, the system of affairs in a parish, is an epitome of the public administration of the nation.

In London, and other great towns, the rates levied on houses according to their rents, bear a tolerable proportion to the trade and circumstances of the occupiers in the same parish: But this average between householder and householder, does not hold between householder and landholder.

A small degree of attention will render this matter sufficiently evident. A farmer, for instance, rents a farm of 150l. a year, which is a moderate rent at a time when farms are so enlarged and taken together. However easily some professions in the throng of a city can procure a living, laudably and otherwise, a farmer, the most primitive, most laudable of all professions, he is sure to endure the curse of Adam, of earning his bread by the sweat of his brow: If he can maintain his family in tolerable decency, he extorts it from a refractory soil,

carefully attended thro' the heats of ſummer, and the biting ſtorms of winter. His neighbour, the tradeſman, lives in a houſe of perhaps 20l. a year, on which ſmall premiſes, his returns and profits ſet him upon an equality with the farmer; with this balance in his favour, that he works and ſells his commodities ſheltered ſnug from all the inclemencies of the ſeaſons, to which he is a ſtranger. If the weather be hot, his windows are opened to admit the cooling breeze; when winter comes, he ſhuts out the keen blaſt, and lighting his fires and his pipe, guards himſelf againſt thoſe extremities the hardy huſbandman is obliged to brave.

A ſix-penny rate collected from theſe two men, will take from the one, three pounds fifteen ſhillings, and from the other——ten ſhillings! this repeated four times a year, the farmer contributes fifteen pounds to the maintainance of the poor; and the tradeſman forty ſhillings. Is it poſſible that any difference in the occupations of theſe two men can vary ſo as to juſtify the diſparity of their taxation? If the one purchaſes all the commodities he ſells, the other diſburſes a proportionate quantity of money in rent, tillage and *tythes*; (another drawback on his labours, for which it will be difficult to infuſe ſo much piety into him as to convince him he receives a valuable conſideration) hazards in trade, and precarious crops, to avoid perplexing the argument, we will ſet againſt each other. If the farmer employs five or ſix yearly ſervants, and the tradeſman but two or three, this will not balance the account; as the proportion paid to the poor is nearly as eight to one. But in ſome profeſſions the tradeſman employs, and of courſe brings into the pariſh, as many, if not more, poor perſons than the farmer. This mode of taxation, therefore, appears not to be founded in equity, but to be highly oppreſſive on the huſbandman.

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But the farmer has neighbours in trade, perhaps brewers or tanners, whoſe premiſes may be rented or rated at a ſum equal to what he is here ſuppoſed to pay. The farmer will however reap as little conſolation in ſuch inſtances as in the foregoing. He is a plain man, obliged to work hard for his family to make both ends meet; the tanner, a man of opulence, lives grand, keeps his carriage for his lady, and a ſtable of hunters for himſelf and friends, if not a pack into the bargain. His domeſtic ſervants out-number thoſe neceſſary to till the farmer's grounds, to which are to be added thoſe employed in the tan-yard; all of whom, as age or infirmities diſable them, are liable, with their deſtitute families, to become chargeable to the pariſh in a two or three fold proportion to thoſe brought into the pariſh by the farmer. Nor will the money ſpent in the pariſh by theſe poor labourers avail in this argument; for firſt, they are ſuch who do not contribute to the rates of the pariſh, and next, all the ſurplus of their money beyond bare neceſſaries, goes to the emolument of the *publican*, who is far from being a profitable member of ſociety; ſo far, that many low country villages can date the commencement of their Poor's rates from the firſt introduction of public houſes into them.

Having ſeen how individuals in the ſame pariſh are comparatively affected by the Poor's rates, we will now in like manner examine how pariſhes are affected, compared with each other collectively.

However advantageous it may be in a political view to the commerce of the nation, to have large manufactures carried on at home; yet on the preſent ſyſtem, they are far from being profitable to the particular ſpots where they are ſituated. How they might be rendered ſalutary in all reſpects, will be conſidered in its proper place.

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We have ſeen, and it will no doubt be generally admitted, that inhabitants whoſe precarious ſubſiſtence immediately depends on their daily labour, cannot be profitable to a pariſh. For families are formed and multiply, and when illneſs interrupts, or infirmities put a period to, the labour which maintains them, the pariſh muſt ſupply the wants of the helpleſs and the ſuperannuated.

In every large town or city, eſpecially where any conſiderable manufactures are carried on, the middle of the town is the centre of trade and politeneſs. Here therefore the capital tradeſmen and ſubſtantial inhabitants, any ways connected with the commerce of the place, generally reſide. Theſe are its ſupport, theſe draw thither, and ſubſiſt, all the reſt. The poorer artificers and labourers, compoſe the out-ſkirts and avenues of the place. It follows therefore, that the pariſh or pariſhes comprehending the middle of the town, are rich and flouriſhing; and theſe have few Poor to provide for. The pariſhes compoſing the ſuburbs are poor, compared with the former, and have the chief part of the Poor of the whole corporation upon their hands: here therefore the rates fall extreamly heavy, with this additional aggravation, that they are leſs able to bear them; and that the burden is brought on them by thoſe who take no part in ſupporting it. Specious reaſoning may make fallacious arguments appear plauſible; but while in ſome pariſhes, as ſome ſuch in the metropolis are known, the Poor's rate is but three pence or a groat in the pound, while in others, in the ſuburbs, it amounts to as many ſhillings as the former pay in pence! there is no need of logical arts to ſhew the diſparity, and to argue the propriety of a more equitable regulation.

But it is not pariſh work-houſes, alms-houſes, nor public charities of whatever ſpecies, however mul-

multiplied, can contain or relieve the miſerable! It is true theſe hide incredible numbers; but numbers ſtill ſtarve unknown and unaſſiſted; beſide thoſe which ſwarm in our ſtreets and highways, and work upon the feelings of our compaſſion in every ſhape which wretchedneſs can aſſume. We can ſcarcely walk ten ſteps without having our eyes diſguſted and our humanity impoſed on by objects which, whether real or feigned, ought not to infeſt the public ways in any well ordered ſociety *. Theſe however only teaze paſſengers into voluntary contributions, (if the expreſſion may be admitted) but when darkneſs favours dark deeds, or even in open day light, wherever the lonelineſs of the place affords an opportunity, our property is frequently raviſhed from us at the penalty of our lives in caſe of a refuſal to reſign it.

What greater indications need be ſhewn of the rottenneſs of a conſtitution, than that ſuch amazing numbers of the members of it, in a fertile plentiful land, ſhould be unable to procure the real neceſſaries of life? and ſhould call for a tax on the remainder to purchaſe them a wretched ſtate of exiſtence! ſo wretched, to conſider it in a humane light, that any perſon of ſenſibility and feeling,

* Magiſtrates may be as active as they pleaſe, in apprehending, whipping, and driving vagrants from pariſh to pariſh; but while affairs continue on their preſent plan, unleſs the Stat 1. Edw. 6. c. 3. were revived and vigorouſly enforced, which orders vagrants to be branded and to be the *ſlaves* of thoſe who apprehend them, for two years; to be fed with bread and water, with an iron collar or ring faſtened on their necks, arms, or legs; and upon running away, to be farther branded, and condemned to ſlavery for life; and upon running away again, to be *hanged!* unleſs this obſolete ſtatute were put in execution, it is not clear how vagrants, the offſpring of vagrants, who have no known ſettlements, can be fixed any where. They may indeed like mad dogs be hunted to death; but the revival of this law ſeems to be a much better abridgment of the work, to ſave trouble.

would think death infinitely more eligible. Humanity is ſhocked at the idea of what are called *work-houſes*, places where hundreds of perſons of both ſexes and all ages, are promiſcuouſly huddled together, lying three or four in a bed, and fed in ſuch a manner as that the perſon who farms them at the loweſt price per head, among ſeveral candidates, may get as much as poſſible by the bargain. The deſtruction of young infants in theſe places is incredible! nor are they regretted by their mercileſs pariſh guardians. Whatever orphans or natural children are caſt upon their care, are eaſily got rid of in the ordinary courſe of pariſh nurſing, without any noiſe; ſince no one is particularly intereſted in the welfare of friendleſs foundlings. When the precarious nature of infant life, even under the moſt judicious care, is conſidered, we can eaſily imagine what muſt become of theſe tender beings when deprived of maternal affection, and committed to the unfeeling management of women only ſolicitous to ſave themſelves from all the trouble they can; confined to the foetid ſteams of a moſt filthy accumulation of poor and dirty people, where the very air muſt to ſuch children convey a poiſonous degree of malignity. To think of this is painful, but to ſtep into ſuch receptacles of poverty, to ſee the fact, and, if poſſible, (unſeen) to be witneſs to the general immoral behaviour, and depravity of theſe unhappy people, regarded by their governor only in a pecuniary view; —to ſee all this will not a perſon pauſe! will he not aſk himſelf, whether all this is the *neceſſary* reſult, and muſt be comprehended in the idea, of civil ſociety?

The love of liberty is natural to all mankind, and to none more than to our own countrymen. It exhibits therefore nothing extraordinary, that people ſhould continue in ſuch houſes with great reluctancy; and that numbers ſhould rather have recourſe to a

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vagabond dependance on the charity of others, while ſweetened with the notion of freedom. To ſucceed in this ſcheme, they muſt ſtudy how to operate on the tender feelings of mankind to obtain relief from them; and their experience ſuggeſts numberleſs arts and little tricks to melt us into compaſſion, and extract the money out of our pockets; which is given as much to relieve ourſelves as thoſe to whom we give it: and thus we have a brief hiſtory of the art of beggary.

In this ſtate of depravity, real and feigned diſtreſs are ſo blended together, and made to aſſiſt each other; that while we guard ourſelves againſt the deceptions of the artful, relief is with-held from the truly wretched: and though impoſtors merit puniſhment, it is really ſhocking that in a plentiful country, in cities abounding in all the conveniences of life, human creatures ſhould periſh for want of all theſe at our doors!

Theſe circumſtances are not produced and inſiſted on as new diſcoveries, they have long been felt and complained of, and the fatal conſequences of their growth and continuance dreaded by all whoſe penetration extended beyond the preſent day. Many public ſpirited gentlemen have at different times merited the acknowledgments of their country, by their patriotic and humane endeavours to form plans for properly employing, and comfortably maintaining the Poor *. Some have propoſed amendments of the Poor Laws on their preſent ſyſtem; others are for repealing all the preſent compulſory ſtatutes, and reſting their proviſion on voluntary contributions †: but the majority ſeem to have con-

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* See the ſeveral ſchemes collected in Burn's hiſtory of the Poor Laws.

† There is very little argument in charging the increaſe of the Poor on the legal maintenance provided for them. Alcock in

ſidered parochial diviſions as too ſmall, and to have been deſirous to have the counties divided into fewer and larger diſtricts *; or for having county diſtricts, undoubtedly from a knowledge of the diſproportion of the quantity of Poor, and of the aſſeſſments for their maintenance between different places; which the uniting ſeveral pariſhes into one diſtrict, appears calculated to ſettle more equally.

The misfortune attending all theſe well meant ſchemes conſiſts in their being directed only to re-

in his Obſervations on the Poor Laws, ſays, that this has a tendency to hurt induſtry, care, and frugality. The fear of coming to want, he ſays, is a ſtrong motive with moſt people, to be induſtrious and ſober; and to make uſe of their youth and health, and ſtrength, to provide ſomething for accidents, ſickneſs, and the infirmities of old age. But that this motive is much weakened when a man has the proſpect of pariſh-pay to rely on.——A moſt comfortable alluring proſpect truly! But can people in general be ſuppoſed ſyſtematically to throw aſide prudence from an inclination to ſpend a *comfortable* old age in a *pariſh work-houſe?* It is true that numbers come to want by their imprudent folly; but ſuch are ſurprized by diſtreſs unawares, unthought of, and come to poverty inadvertently. Conſidering the number of taxes wrung from us, if the maintenance of the poor reſted on voluntary contribution, it would be found that when people were called on for their charity, they would anſwer with a ſhake of their heads, that it began at home; and that truly they found ſo many calls for their money that they could not ſpare any; and would refer the collectors to the rich: and the rich would be found not to ſpare much more from their vices, than the middling people from their neceſſary occaſions.

* Of this nature is the bill now depending in parliament for the relief of the Poor: but this bill ſets out on a very ſtrange principle, thus expreſſed in the preamble; where it ſays,—'*And* 'whereas, by means of the proviſions aforeſaid, the rates collected 'for the uſe of the Poor may in a ſhort time be greatly reduced, '*and* THE POOR, *inſtead of being dangerous and grievous to the com-* 'munity, *be rendered* HIGHLY USEFUL *and* BENEFICIAL, as by 'their induſtry they may be made, not only to contribute to the 'mutual aid and relief of each other, but likewiſe to the *promoting* 'of *agriculture*, and to the *manufacturing* of great quantities of 'commodities for which vaſt ſums are now paid to foreign coun-'tries; be it *therefore* enacted, &c.'—A peruſal of the enſuing pages, will ſuggeſt proper remarks on this paſſage.

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ſtrain the more obvious grievances reſulting from the multitudes of deſtitute Poor: their object ſeems to be the *ſymptoms*, without adverting to the *cauſe* of the diſorder. Their authors either did not ſee, or were not willing to point out, the cauſes of poverty, and ſhew the true remedy. That ſurgeon would very indiſcreetly exerciſe his profeſſion, who in undertaking the cure of any deep ſore, ſhould content himſelf with a ſuperficial healing, by ſkinning the ſurface over, while the cauſe of the ailment continued rankling at the bottom, corroding and inflaming by confinement, until it burſts open again with redoubled virulence. That builder would ill juſtify his ſkill, who ſhould prop and ſhoar up a building, repairing it above, while the neglected foundation by ſome unobſerved decay was ready to ſink under the weight of the whole pile.

It is not by altering the mode of ſubſiſting the Poor, as the Poor of a pariſh, the Poor of a diſtrict, or the Poor of a county; and under the ſpecious idea of regulating them, to give riſe to a new ſet of offices * chargeable upon the rates; and under the pleaſing notion of employing them and carrying on manufactures, to withdraw work from artificers, until they are reduced to work in, and for the emolument of theſe Poor-houſes: it is not theſe nor many more effects which might be ſhewn to reſult from ſuch ſchemes, that will eaſe the pariſhioners, and reduce the number of Poor. The evil is not ſo much in the mode of providing for the Poor, as in *poverty* conſidered abſtractedly: it

* Almoſt every act of parliament adds to the number of placemen of ſome denomination or other, or enlarges the powers of thoſe already in being: burdening the ſubject with the maintenance, and ſubjecting them to the authority, of dependants on the power they derive their exiſtence from; whoſe number is as the ſand on the ſea ſhore. The cauſe of this will be ſhewn farther on.

is the Poor themſelves that ought to be cured of their poverty, and ſome barrier eſtabliſhed againſt the future danger of want. All ſchemes ſhort of this, may appear plauſible, be highly extolled, but will only amuſe us to our coſt, and hide perhaps for a ſeaſon what they cannot remove.

The number and increaſe of the Poor, appears now to be a ſubject that will not admit to be much longer trifled with. It is high time to enquire into the cauſe of ſuch general diſtreſs; to inveſtigate how ſuch numbers of people are continually falling to poverty; and why ſo few, by all the arts of induſtry, are able to ſurmount it: to find out the means of rendering ſubſiſtence leſs precarious; and *thus* relieve the ſubject from being loaded ſo heavily with the maintenance of thoſe who now cannot ſubſiſt themſelves. In brief, to recur again to a figure before made uſe of; to repair thoſe rotten parts in the foundation of our ſtate, which, as will be quickly ſhewn, threaten no leſs than, by giving way, to overwhelm us with the ruin of the whole ſtructure.

It is a maxim in politics, that the number of inhabitants form the riches of a State; but experience informs us that the maxim is defective; ſince a conſiderable part of the number in this iſland, is a burden upon the remainder. To ſupply therefore what is wanting in that aphoriſm, it remains to add, that this number be uſefully employed: that is, occupied in labours no leſs advantageous to the community in general, than beneficial to themſelves in particular.

Many excellent treatiſes have been written, and many ingenious plans formed, for the more equitable adminiſtration of government; with a view to correct and exclude thoſe evils experienced in civil ſociety: but they have been in general too chimerical in their projects, and have never obtained in uſe, as attempting too much. It is in

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vain to pretend to reduce mankind to an abſolute general equality; it would be abſurd to effect it, if poſſible. Whatever may be thought of that current levelling maxim, that all mankind are equal by nature, it is falſe in fact. Every individual of mankind differs in bodily abilities, and in intellectual faculties; and to deprive the ſtronger, more enterprizing and ingenious, from reaping the fruits of their ſuperior talents; would be to quaſh all the noble purſuits of mankind, and to ſink ſociety into an aſſociation of Hottentots; whom meer corn and carrion will enable to live in filth and ignorance.

All that the natural equality of mankind ought to convey is, that no one be with-held or excluded from the opportunity of improving his ſituation in life by a laudable exerciſe of his natural abilities. It would be prepoſterous to level the ſtrong with the weak; the ingenious and learned, with the dull and ignorant; and to make no diſtinction between the worthy and the unworthy! This would be abſurdity in the very abſtract; this would in ſhort time degrade all the noble powers of man, to mere brutality. All that policy ought to effect, is to check the purſuits of thoſe who aim to exalt themſelves to the depreſſion of their neighbours, and to reſtrain the advantages of one man from becoming the diſadvantage of another. Theſe are the politics of common ſenſe; all elſe is but the ſport of luxuriant imaginations. The world is wide enough, and will produce enough; there is no natural neceſſity that my cloathing myſelf warm, ſhould occaſion another to be expoſed naked to the rigours of the weather; nor that my drinking wine ſhould depend on another being obliged to drink water: nor is it leſs abſurd to contend for every one being confined to ſuch ſpiritleſs beverage. Away then with ſuch chimeras, and let us attend to matters of real import.

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Without wandering in Utopian ſcenes, or leaving the conſideration of mankind ſuch as we find them, it will require very little argument to convince any intelligent enquirer, that all mankind have a natural right to enjoy the common benefits of nature; that all are entitled to ſuch acquired advantages as their abilities qualify them, and their induſtry enables them laudably to procure; and that when calamities or old age overtake any who are unprovided for ſubſiſtence, they have then a natural claim to the humane aſſiſtance of their fellow creatures: a claim which no one can gainſay who feels himſelf liable to the accidents, and ſubject to the decays, attendant on human nature; and who reflects how much he owed to the tender care of others, during a helpleſs infancy.

After premiſing thus much, the following propoſition will not be thought to require much proof:

That thoſe laws and cuſtoms which tend to the diffuſion of property among the members of a conſtitution; or, which perhaps may be better expreſſed by ſaying—which tend to hinder the inordinate accumulation of property, are wholſome; advantageous to the whole as a body, and to the individuals as members of that body.

For, that ſtate muſt be ſtrong at home and reſpectable abroad, whoſe ſubjects are animated with that ſpirit of freedom, and love for their country, which the poſſeſſion of property in it will inſpire.—For, to a nation of ſlaves, unattached to their country by advantages worth defending, what matters it who are their maſters? The only queſtion then, like that of the aſs in the fable, is, whether the enemy will put greater loads on their backs?—For, where property is diffuſed, the means of ſubſiſtence will be leſs precarious; every one will be encouraged to labour when there is a proſpect of reaping thoſe fruits which ſweeten it. A general induſtry

duſtry will thus prevail, and a general competency will crown it.

In the conſideration of property, that of land claims the firſt place; as it is the ſource of all other ſpecies of it: and as that which moſt attaches the poſſeſſors of it to the ſpot where it lies, and intereſts them moſt in its welfare.

Whatever laws and cuſtoms therefore tend to hinder the inordinate accumulation of *landed property*, muſt in an eſpecial manner contribute to the welfare of a people.

This general truth being eſtabliſhed, we will convert it to uſe by making ſome curſory obſervations on the influence the Engliſh conſtitution has on the poſſeſſion of land, and then trace the effects the preſent ſtate of property has on ſociety.

Land is held in England by various tenures; founded on abſurd principles and obſolete uſages. It is needleſs to enter into a particular examination of the laws and cuſtoms of deſcent, and the different kinds of entails and limitations in ſucceſſion: The moſt general entailment being from eldeſt ſon to eldeſt ſon, an examination into the merits and tendency of this mode of ſucceſſion, on the principles of humanity and policy, will open an important field of diſquiſition, and inform us fully on the ſubject of the preſent eſſay.

According to this tenure the whole inheritance of a father who dies, leaving perhaps ſix children, is veſted in *that* ONE, who, by claim of primogeniture, is in law conſtituted his father's heir! which is alſo the caſe where the owner of a freehold eſtate dies inteſtate. The *ſecond* ſon cannot inherit unleſs the firſt die without iſſue, or his iſſue be extinct. The *third* cannot inherit, until ſuch failure of the firſt and ſecond; and ſo through the whole collateral line, daughters excluded, who, poor girls, have no other dependence than the caſual perſonal

proviſion their father may have made for them; or an unportioned dependance on their lordly elder brother. Where is juſtice, where is humanity, where is ſound policy all this while? *Voces et preterea nihil!*

The entailment of eſtates, which aroſe from the ancient feodal or military tenures of knight-ſervice, is now juſtified from the principle of keeping up the dignity of families, which the eldeſt ſon is enabled to do by ſucceeding to the inheritance preſerved entire. In fact this is not upholding families, but a partial fondneſs for upholding the firſt ſhoots of family ſtems; for the ſake of which, families are diſmembered; all the other equally vigorous and valuable branches being lopped off and thrown aſide, to confine the ſap to the nouriſhment of this *one*.

Thus in every family all the other children are ſacrificed, caſt on a caſual trifling dependence, to veſt the whole patrimony in that one, for the ſake of a falſe punctilio.

All theſe excluded children, from pride of families from which they derive little but the honour of claiming kindred with them; whatever their ſlender means may be, emulate the rank of the elder branch. This induces a general extravagance and taſte for luxury, which from this ſource becomes univerſally contagious. This muſt be upheld; therefore fathers and brothers, that their children and relations may not diſgrace them by ſinking from their own rank, nor hang upon them for ſubſiſtence; are eternally gaping for places and penſions for them, which are ſhamefully multiplied to anſwer theſe laudable ends.

However the name and appearance of the thing may be qualified, is not the caſting the *genteel* Poor thus upon their country for a maintenance, *mutato nomine*, analogous to the vulgar Poor being caſt upon a pariſh?

Hence

Hence ariſes all the danger our liberties (ſuch as they are) are continually in, and the progreſſive retrenchment of them. Theſe are the men whoſe attention is continually turned to the enſlaving their country. It is a natural conſequence, ariſing from the circumſtances they are in, which, if they do not amount to a juſtification, yet muſt be admitted in alleviation. What is a country to thoſe who inherit from it nothing but an obligation to uphold an empty rank? When ſuch therefore are attached to the government for bread, what is more natural than that they ſhould exert their talents to render their dependence as *permanent* as poſſible? and endeavour by all deviſable methods to ſtrengthen and enlarge the power of the adminiſtration over the people *. As families increaſe, the number of political geniuſes ſo ſubſiſted and ſo employed, and who ſo employ themſelves in order to be ſo ſubſiſted †, vaſtly out-number thoſe attached to the cauſe of their country by their landed poſſeſſions, who are but the units of their reſpective families. Nor do even theſe tell for their number; for thoſe whoſe real intereſts call for their counteracting the machinations of the minions of power, are too frequently rendered indolent by their affluent eſtates, if not drawn over to the oppoſite intereſt by their own extravagance, and by the glare of honours and court favour.

* The regal adminiſtration is not by any means here intended, but that ſubordinate degree of authority lodged in the hands of the miniſtry, which by ſo much as it is enlarged and ſtrengthened, by ſo much is the regal authority weakened, and the rights of the ſubject abridged.

† Sometimes indeed, like Pamphlet in the farce, *ad utrumvis paratus*, they aſſume the character of patriots, and ſignalize themſelves in pleading the cauſe of their country; a bait the poor credulous populace never fail to bite at. If they have any knack at this kind of angling, they are ſure of being bought off at a price proportionate to their ſkill, from continuing this ſport.

Hence ariſes the neceſſity of multiplying taxes, which however refined and plauſible the pleas for them may appear, ſpring in great meaſure from the obligation of providing for the numerous branches thus lopped off, and denied any ſhare of nouriſhment from the family ſtems. The borrowing great ſums from individuals, for theſe and the current exigencies of ſtate, and giving them nominal capitals in ideal funds, the intereſt of which is paid by taxes impoſed for thoſe purpoſes; theſe, and all the intricate ſchemes depending on ſuch reſources, have given riſe to a ſpecies of artificial traffic with ſuppoſititious property, as pernicious to the nation, as all tranſactions founded on falſe principles muſt of neceſſity be.

Proverbs are aphoriſms containing in abſtraction the wiſdom of nations; and we have an Engliſh one which tells us, that, *The pitcher never goes ſo often to the well, but it is broke at laſt.* The national pitcher has ſo many to drink out of it, and is ſent ſo often to be filled, that it has long been in danger of receiving ſome unlucky blow which might crack it; for which reaſon it ought to be very tenderly handled: and even then there is no hopes of its diſcrediting the experience of good old houſewives.

The national debt has been contemplated with eyes of apprehenſion from its firſt beginning to its preſent enormous amount. People have often talked of ſpunges being applied to it; but it is greatly to be feared, that whenever an extraordinary meaſure is had recourſe to, upon affairs coming to ſo fatal a criſis; ſo ſoft an application will never wipe out the marks. Late, very late may a cataſtrophe happen, which, with the ruin of ſo many thouſands who have become proprietors of this debt, menaces no leſs than to involve the ſubverſion of that ſyſtem

of

of government which may then exiſt! This ſeems to be the only remedy for ſuch a complication of diſorders: when like a new phœnix ſpringing from the aſhes of the old one, a new foundation will be laid for poſterity to erect another ſyſtem of corruption on; at the expence of all concerned, at ſuch a calamitous juncture.

Notwithſtanding the ſophiſtry which is and may be made uſe of, by intereſted parties; ſuch a criſis muſt *as inevitably* draw on, as death to terminate human life. Were a horſe to be loaden with peas, though caſt on him ſingly, he might ſuſtain a burden ſo gradually increaſing, a long time; but he would at length ſink down under the oppreſſion. Thus every ſucceeding year being loaded with not only its own burden, but with that of every preceeding year ſince the revolution; the *preſent* generation being taxed for the payment of the intereſt of the money borrowed for the Duke of Marlborough's campaigns, and for all ſupplies borrowed for government ſervice ſince to the preſent moment; until they can diſcharge the principal! this is a melancholy legacy to poſterity! It is evident it will all be diſcharged at once.

Thus it appears that the excluding younger children from participating in the ſucceſſion to their parents land, in order to inveſt the entire inheritance in the eldeſt ſon, is no leſs miſchievous in its political tendency, than it is abſurd, iniquitous and cruel, in the firſt inſtance: being in a national view productive of taxes, debts, and corruption; which all lead to ſure deſtruction. It remains now to examine its tendency in other reſpects.

Having repreſented proverbs in ſo favourable a point of view, it is hoped the quotation of another may be excuſed: which as it owes its foundation to the preſent argument, is, in the language of the

gentlemen of the law, in point. This proverb aſſures us that, *The younger ſon* (is) *the better gentleman.* A pithy ſentence, and as little liable to be queſtioned as the former. Human nature does not voluntarily ſeek trouble; neceſſity is the ſpur to the faculties; wherever it is eaſily ſituated it very readily yields to enjoyment. Hence the young gentleman who luckily ſtands foremoſt of his brethren, conſcious of his ample dependence, thinks more how to taſte the ſweets of life, than by treading the rugged paths of Study, and by aſſiduous application, to ſtore his mind with uſeful knowledge. He leaves learning and worth, to thoſe whoſe ſubſiſtence depends on their talents, and on the proper exerciſe of them *.

A young heir who ruſhes into life, with his pockets full of gold, and his head full of ſchemes of pleaſure, is like a ſhip under full ſail, which,

* That worthy Amazonian advocate for the liberties of her country, Mrs. Catherine Macaulay, in her Hiſtory of England, (Vol. II. p. 83 *n.*) has made a judicious remark introduced by her account of Sir John Elliot, which is applicable to the above obſervations.——— 'The ſtudy of the common law of England, ſays ſhe, was, in theſe days, conſidered as a very neceſſary part of education for the men of fortune who aſpired to the honour of ſerving their country in the important function of members of parliament. Modern education is on a very different plan: the tour of Europe ſucceeds the univerſity, and compleats the fine gentleman; whilſt his attention to faſhions, and to all the trifling parts of foreign manners, take place of the more drudging ſcience of the law, the ſtudy of politicks, and the conſtitution of his country. To this change perhaps may be juſtly aſcribed part of thoſe misfortunes which are entirely imputed to the venality of the preſent times.' It may be added to what this fair patriot has obſerved, that *this change* is the *cauſe* of the venality of the preſent times: ſince diſſipation and profligacy, at the ſame time that they render men neceſſitous, debauch their minds, and diſpoſe them to have recourſe to any dirty meaſures that may repair their private fortunes, under the ſhelter of a court.

without

without a ſufficiency of ballaſt on board to keep her right, muſt meet with very fair weather, indeed, if ſhe does not overſet. Our young ſpark, in like manner, runs great danger of overſetting both his conſtitution and term in his eſtate, before he ſteers into the harbours of ſatiety, indolence and oblivion.

If he preſerves conſtitution ſufficient to become the father of a family, and prudence enough to preſerve his eſtate clear, ſo as to be able to give ſome fortunes to his daughters, and to bequeath ſome ready money to his younger ſons, the family may be decently diſpoſed of, without much difficulty. But if the eſtate be encumbered and his daughters unportioned, or poſſeſſed of more pride than money, the poor girls too frequently grow grey under the name of Miſſes, and under a ſlaviſh dependance on the tyrant of his brethren.

Gentlemen thus enriched by the ſpoil of their brethren, are too polite, too fond of gaiety and amuſements, to continue in their old manſions on their eſtates among their tenants; but flock up to the court and metropolis; drawing after them all whoſe genius and activity ſpur them to endeavour the improvement of their circumſtances beyond what a country thus deſerted can afford them. Thus is the country not only drained of money, but of their beſt heads and hands alſo, which naturally follow it. Politicians and commercial writers, reaſoning from their preſent ſyſtems, may talk what they pleaſe of the advantages of an overgrown metropolis; but ſound reaſoning and facts will ſtill be againſt them. It is not ſuch an indifferent matter where the landed gentlemen live, as ſome may imagine. It is true, live where they will they muſt eat; and though they live in town, the bread they eat comes from the country; yet by ſo enormous an aggregation of inhabitants on one ſpot, the culture,

culture, trade and manufacture of corn, &c. are in a correſponding unequal proportion drawn into the neighbourhood of its conſumption. Beſide the ſcarcity of money in the remote parts of the country, and its plenty in London, ſhews that a country derives more advantages from gentlemen of fortune ſpending their rents where they receive them, than meerly the value of the bread they eat.

London, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, including the ſuburbs under that name, was an inconſiderable place to what it now appears to be; yet the apprehenſions of its growth, induced not only the Queen but the parliament to check its extenſion: and proclamations to this end were publiſhed from time to time during the ſucceeding reigns; but, as it is found, without effect *. For while country gentlemen *will* reſide at the capital, and hang about the court, thoſe hands in the country, thus become ſuperfluous, *muſt* follow, for ſubſiſtence. It will not be found that this aggregation of people cauſes an increaſe of our commerce and manufactures, though many, from their flouriſhing appearance in London, are induced to believe ſo. Thus Anderſon, in his Hiſtory of Commerce, when he gives a chronological ſeries of the enlargement and improvement of this city, dazzled with the ſpirit of trade and commerce which it diſplays, attempts to treat the arguments uſed againſt the good conſequences of this growth, as weak objections. But ſeated in the centre of this vaſt hurry, he miſtakes a concentration of trade, for an increaſe of it: and though our commerce has certainly on the whole been in a growing ſtate for numbers of years

* It is ſomewhere remarked, that Copenhagen has been continually increaſing in ſize, ſince the ſubverſion of the Daniſh liberty.

back; yet is not the enlargement of it the reſult of the growth of the metropolis; though the decay of many towns formerly of note for particular branches of trade, plainly ſhews that it thrives at the expence of them *.

It is well known from another evidence of the abſurdity of ſuch overgrown cities (and abſurdities always manifeſt themſelves) that the births in London are not ſufficient to uphold it; and that its numbers are ſupplied by a continual influx of people from the country and from foreign lands. The *latter* are certainly all clear gain, but the acquiſition of the *former* from our own country, juſtifies a compariſon formerly made uſe of, in which the nation was ſaid to reſemble a ricketty child, whoſe head was too big for, and it may be added, at the expence of, its body.

Another evil conſequence reſulting from this paſſion in the gentry for a town reſidence, remains to be inſtanced. Nobility and gentry living thus at a diſtance from their eſtates, and in ſo expenſive a place as London proves to people of fortune; that they may reduce their buſineſs into as ſmall a com-

* 'The unhappy ſituation of the county of Middleſex is ſuch, 'as almoſt to environ the city of London; and one of the con'ſequences of this ſituation is, that the numerous Poor which, 'from the moſt remote parts of the kingdom, are attracted to 'the metropolis, though the city have the benefit of their la'bour, as having their reſidence moſtly in the circumjacent pa'riſhes, become legally ſettled there, and ſo become a burden 'on the county. Hence the difference between the Poor's rate 'in the city and ſuburb pariſhes: and in all the improvements 'which of late years have been made of the city eſtates by build'ing, the citizens have conſtantly had an eye to the accommo'dation of the merchants and other principal traders, and ſeem 'to have forgot that as well the poor as the rich, need houſes 'to dwell in.'

CASE of the County of MIDDLESEX, with reſpect to the *Gaol* of NEWGATE.

paſs.

paſs as poſſible, that it may interfere as little as may be with their pleaſures, which are now become their main purſuits, and becauſe little farmers cannot afford to pay rents continually raiſed upon them by their landlord's extravagance; land is parcelled out into as large farms as tenants can be found to engage in. By this means a quantity of land which would admit of being divided into perhaps ſix ſmall farms, on which by careful cultivation as many induſtrious families might ſubſiſt in a decent independence, is engroſſed by a wholeſale undertaker, under whom thoſe individuals who would form ſuch families, are forced to work as ſervants. For many of theſe men and women who, with more favourable proſpects in view, would yield to the voice of nature, and bring up induſtrious families, are deterred from laudable engagements by the knowledge of the difficulties of ſubſiſting in a ſervile dependence, and the fear of want: and their apprehenſions are juſtified, when their fellow ſervants marry, and bring their children, and laſtly themſelves, to the inheritance of a pariſh maintenance. Yet as nature will ſometimes break through the bounds of prudence, intemperate ſallies of incontinence will enſue, to the production of baſtards, ſhame, and profligacy. What a perverſion of natural propenſities! all ſpringing from a miſtaken ſyſtem of policy! Add to this, that ſervants working for hire, to the profit of another, naturally ſeek to ſpare themſelves all the labour they can; not having that ſpur to induſtry which a property in the fruits of it gives: hence a large extent of ground managed for, and under the eye of, one man, will not yield that produce, which the ſame or ſome additional number of hands would reap from it, if divided into ſeveral independant farms.

Thus

Thus at firſt the monopoly of land in property, produces monopolies of farms, and this, though perhaps not ſo obviouſly to ſome eyes, checks cultivation, and cauſes a ſcanty produce from the land. Propagation is impeded, by great numbers being excluded from the opportunity of becoming induſtrious ſober ſubjects, and being kept in ſervitude of body, and its conſequence, depravity of mind. Pariſhes are loaded with the burden of thoſe, who would elſe have no occaſion to apply to them; for when people ſpend their vigour in ſervitude, what remains but a deſtitute old age?

It is imagined theſe melancholy facts cannot be conteſted, and melancholy they certainly are, whether conſidered in a political or in a humane view; it remains now that we turn our eyes toward the trading part of the nation, and ſee how our argument will be affected by the examination.

And here we ſhall find this barbarous policy of ſacrificing the intereſts of the younger children of a family to the aggrandiſement of the eldeſt branch, to teem with more evils than can be contained in theſe narrow limits; ſuffice it however to glance at ſome of them.

It ſeems clear that there ought to be a proportion in the employments of a people, between the cultivators of land, and the manufacturers of, and traders in, its produce: a proportion which if not maintained, will operate to the prejudice of the individuals of the branch ſo overſtocked. How this diſproportion might operate if the exceſs were on the ſide of agriculture, or whether ſuch exceſs could be, is needleſs to examine; as it will follow from what we have already ſeen, that the contrary is the real ſtate of the caſe *.

We

* It is a true obſervation that there is no rule without an exception; yet it is imagined that the Hollanders will hardly ad-

We have ſeen that the common tenure by which land is held, tends to keep the poſſeſſion of it in few hands; and not only ſo, but to reduce the number of landholders, by the co-operation of a moſt infernal check on the freedom of matrimonial connexions; and by iſſue becoming extinct. The number of landholders being ſmall compared with the ordinary number and increaſe of families; thoſe (we ſpeak now of the middling ranks of people) who are thus excluded from an intereſt in land, muſt turn their attention to manufactures and trade. Thus there ſprings up a greater number of artiſans than is proportionate to the quantity of commodities to be wrought; and a greater number of traders than the quantity of goods to be transferred will maintain. Nor will this take up much trouble to prove.

The fewer hands any commodity is in, the more is the price of that commodity in their power. We have ſeen that land is held in large quantities and in few hands, which neceſſarily renders the produce

mit being produced as one, having little in common with other nations. Their ſituation is truly ſingular; a number of refugees crouded on little ſpots which they have ſtolen from the ſea, ſubſiſt in a continual ſtate of violence with that element, which is conſtantly ſapping and forcing their intrenchments, which they as conſtantly are obliged to watch and repair. A people living in ſo peculiar a ſtate of oppoſition to nature, may be conſidered as an exception to all common principles. In ſhort, they are to be looked upon as a people or a metropolis without a country: hence their ſubſiſtence is all derived from their neighbours. The ſea is their proper element, they are factors and carriers for all Europe; and in return receive the neceſſaries of life, and money. Induſtry is all their dependance, and their attention to their true intereſts, is a uſeful leſſon to all the world.

It might admit of a queſtion, whether Europe could admit of more nations or aſſociations of people in the ſame circumſtances with the Dutch, to thrive with equal advantage?

of the land dear * at the firſt hand; and the competition of the numbers which throng into every branch of manufactures, tends to reduce the price of labour, and leſſen the profits of the articles wrought and dealt in; ſo that at the ſame time that the prices of goods are extravagantly raiſed, the artiſan and trader can ſcarcely live. The misfortune therefore extends to the manufactures, which are in general ſlighter made than formerly; the great attention now being diverted from the ſound and ſubſtantial execution of work, to the diſpatching the greateſt quantity in the leaſt time. Thus eating the bread out of each others mouths; trade is rendered ſo precarious that numbers are daily ſinking under the weight of expences and taxes which their returns will not anſwer. Their property is ſeized by their creditors, and their buſineſs goes to their more ſucceſsful neighbours. For as conſiderable dealers can afford to ſell for leſs profit than their poorer neighbours, they therefore underſell them until they break them, when they ſwallow up their trade. Thus does a monopoly of land neceſſarily lead to a monopoly of trade; and both to a general poverty, and a ſlaviſh dependance of the *many* on the *few*.

To trace this ſerious ſubject farther. What is life, what is country, what are morals worth, when all property, all hopes, all deſirable proſpects are withdrawn, paſt all retrieving? When men are involved, nothing but a priſon, a life of ſervitude, or of beggary in view; what is life worth to thoſe who embarked with more pleaſing expectations? At

* We need ſeek no farther for the cauſe of the extravagant price of proviſions. Engroſſers in trade of all ſorts, are it is true vultures who prey upon the public: but the evil does not primarily ariſe from them. Their co-operation with the grower is however alarming in its conſequences, eſpecially in a place of ſuch vaſt conſumption as London.

ſuch fatal extremities, a rope, a razor, or a piſtol, too frequently appear to the phlegmatic Engliſhman as the more eligible alternatives! If youth, health and ſpirits ſupport them and encourage them to farther trials, they are, by another article of deſtructive policy, torn away from their families, their country, and themſelves; who have all calls for them which they might even then in ſome meaſure anſwer, and ſurrendered to be immured with filth, wretchedneſs and vice! there to pine away a uſeleſs miſerable exiſtence; effectually dead to all valuable purpoſes; until bodily death or an act of grace releaſe them! We will ſuppoſe them at length ſet at liberty; pennyleſs in pocket, debilitated in body, vitiated in mind! depreſſed in ſpirit, and of conſequence totally ruined in fortune! are theſe the ſuperior, the boaſted privileges of Engliſhmen?

What is a country worth where a man inherits ſuch a birthright? Perſons of broken fortunes and broken hopes can beſt anſwer the queſtion! the conſequences ſpeak their anſwer. Theſe, while capable of exerting themſelves, ſee all the world before them where to chuſe: and ingenious heads and expert hands will think themſelves under no obligation to wait for executions and impriſonments, when misfortunes and diſappointments bring them in view. Our colonies invite them over, and promiſe to afford ſcope for the exerciſe of their abilities: and rival neighbours will gladly communicate to them thoſe advantages, no longer to be hoped for where they have a better right to expect them. Thus is our country drained of the moſt valuable of her unfortunate ſons; for the unworthy, ſetting laws at defiance, ſtay at home to make repriſals on their countrymen. What will morals be thought worth by deſperate men who cannot ſubſiſt by them? verily nothing! and where, by the general con-

centration

centration of property in few hands, ſuch ſwarms of aſpiring young fellows throng continually up to a luxurious city in hopes of making their fortunes; there is nothing wonderful in their ſpoiling each other's market; nor that many of them ſhould turn profligate upon ſo capital a diſappointment, and take to ill courſes where there is ſo much opportunity for a miſapplication of their beſt talents.

It is a melancholy fruit of a wrong ſyſtem of policy, that people whoſe deſperate ſituation has ruined their morals, ſhould be drove to break through a barrier miſapplied, and ſupply their neceſſities by violence! Hence proceeds another calamity ſhocking to humanity: and, taking more circumſtances into the account than may be prudent to mention; one, worthy of the moſt ſerious attention! The outrages of violence ought to be, and muſt be guarded againſt and repreſt; but——the life of a man is not ſufficiently eſtimated either to his country or to himſelf; and the heart of humanity muſt bleed to ſee men whoſe misfortunes have rendered them wicked *, and whoſe wickedneſs has rendered them culpable, carried by cartloads in the vigour of youth, to have the lamp of life extinguiſhed! Lives which thus become forfeit to their country, ought not to be thrown away, but applied to works of atonement and public utility: and——if humanity ſhould not prove ſufficiently eloquent againſt this fatal extravagance of human lives, let

* Some readers will be apt to think the expreſſion ought to be inverted, and the wickedneſs placed firſt: but the circumſtances which *lead* to wickedneſs are certainly mi-fortunes; and theſe frequently begin to take place before the unhappy ſufferers by them could diſtinguiſh right from wrong, or even before they had a being, and moreover admit of a natural traduction from thoſe miſtaken principles which operate to the monopoly of landed property.

it be added, that *it muſt* be founded on wrong principles, ſince experience ſhews the *means* to be diſproportioned to the *end*. For in confirmation of ſome former obſervations, we ſee life in deſperate circumſtances not to be valued to the degree ſuppoſed by the laws. Want and wickedneſs have ſo perverted Britiſh bravery, that the journey to Tyburn, from being a reflexion of terror, is become a current jeſt; and the familiar ſight of their companions ſwinging by a cord in the agonies of death, has not even influence ſufficient to reſtrain theſe wretches from pilfering among an aſſembly collected from no other principles than what would carry them to a fair or a puppet-ſhow.

Nor do the lawleſs and the miſerable wholly conſiſt of the lower claſſes of mankind; it might be difficult to eſtimate what proportion is furniſhed from thoſe whom a genteel parentage from proſcribed younger brothers, has deprived of the inclination and knowledge how to ſubſiſt in a noble independence. Appointments in the army, navy, law, church, and public offices, are, like trade, overſtocked with candidates; and are difficult to be procured. The fate of thoſe whoſe education has been confined to theſe views, and who fail of ſucceſs, is eaſy to imagine. Of thoſe who gain admittance, numbers of their families and deſcendants come to diſtreſs: and it is not uncommon for vagrants to quote the gentility of their parentage; or their deſcent or alliance, two or three removes diſtant, with perſons of figure. Genteel employments are merely perſonal, yet ſeldom teach œconomy; a regard for appearance, a dependance on the income of the next quarter, and a reliance on intereſt for advancement, too often lead the incumbents to an expence equal to, ſometimes beyond, their wages. What the caſe of families muſt be, when their de-

pendance drops! need not be explained. Happy, if a taſte for gaiety and eaſe, does not guide the girls to private lodgings and to Bow ſtreet, and thence down to priſons, hoſpitals, and the open ſtreets; and the boys to the plantations or the gallows.

This curſory view of our political circumſtances will not be an unprofitable one; ſince a knowledge of what is wrong, gives us a negative perception at leaſt of what is right; and leads to a ſuggeſtion of the ſuitable remedy. We have ſeen that we are over-run with Poor, for whom we cannot provide; and with lawleſs miſcreants whom we cannot reclaim. This proves to a demonſtration that there is ſome fundamental error in our conſtitution: and it is *there* the remedy muſt be applied, if we ſincerely mean to ſave our country effectually from impending deſtruction. Whatever may be projected ſhort of this, all proviſions for the Poor, all penal laws againſt evil doers, all palliatives of whatever kind, will prove ineffectual, will co-operate with and only aggravate the diſorders.

It is not to be denied but that our nobility and gentry prove themſelves very public ſpirited on every laudable occaſion which calls for their generoſity: and that our public charities are evidences of the humanity of our countrymen. Public foundations and charitable aſſociations abound among us, beſide the legal aſſeſſments: yet——all prove inſufficient to counter-act thoſe grievances which would no longer exiſt, if the ſource of them were once ſtopped. For if the rich can ſpare ſo much out of their overflowings, the queſtion obtrudes itſelf upon us, whether it would not be more for the advantage of the nation to effect a general competency? whether we ſhould not be ſtronger, our liberties ſtand upon a broader, a ſurer baſis, if thoſe who

who are now ſunk to poverty, enjoyed property in their own right as ſubſtantial, independent, huſbandmen and artiſans; rather than miſerably to linger out a life of wretchedneſs, dependent on the contributions of others? whether, in ſhort, by checking the inordinate poſſeſſions of particulars, it would not be better if ſome could not ſo freely ſpare, what the generality would not need?

We have inconteſtibly ſeen that the monopoly of landed property in few hands, is big with all the evils this poor country has to complain of; as withholding from numbers the means of ſubſiſtence, and reducing them to all the horrors of want, to the enabling others to make a wanton profuſion of them: as loading us with taxes and impoſts on every article of conſumption, even to the taxing the common benefits of nature, the privilege of admitting the light of the ſun into our houſes!—as creating a new ſpecies of property extracted and wrung from the vitals of the public; to fatten vultures and minions of miniſterial power, and to rivet the yokes of bondage upon our necks.

It is an unthankful office to bring diſagreeable tidings, and to ſay harſh things, however upright the intention may be from which they proceed. Tenderneſs and reſerve however in ſome inſtances become cruelty; and what was ſaid by the apoſtle Paul of old, muſt be the apology on the preſent occaſion, *Am I therefore become your enemy, becauſe I tell you the truth?*

Ye great ones of the earth, who accumulate and apply the bread of others to the purpoſes of corruption, riot and diſſipation, and when the cries of their diſtreſſes reach you, complain of the obligation to communicate to their wants; how will ye get rid of the incumbrance? ye will not diſincumber yourſelves of thoſe extenſive tracts of land, which

which ought to be more equally diſtributed; and which ſo regulated would baniſh miſery from the nation; (for the degree of miſery on one part, correſponds exactly to the exceſs of wealth on the other, as produced by it;) ye will not part with your oſtentation, your pleaſures, your exceſſes: how will ye quiet the clamours of indigence? You muſt either afford the poor the means of independence, or you muſt diveſt them of all notion of it, by converting them to ſlaves in name as well as in effect; and treat them to all intents and purpoſes like the Spartan *helots:* or if you will not do the one, and cannot do the other; by an artful ſtroke of policy, rid the country of them entirely, by enticing them to be tranſported altogether, to ſtarve at a diſtance on the ſands of Florida. But ſuppoſing this to be effected, it would be only a temporary riddance, though it would perform much more than any ſcheme for their relief and ſubſiſtence can poſſibly propoſe: for while mankind are allowed to increaſe, property to be accumulated, by younger ſons being cut off from landed inheritance; numbers will ſtill become deſtitute for the want of what is ſo unjuſtifiably with-held from them. What will ye do? Will ye obtain an Act to caſtrate all your younger children? and all not poſſeſſed of a certain degree of property? No: for you will then miſs the neceſſary miniſters to your indolence, your magnificence, and your vices. Something however muſt be timely reſolved on, before affairs come to a fatal criſis, and the Poor ſnatch the remedy themſelves.

Generouſly perform a deed which may even yet ſave our ſeemingly devoted country; and which will tranſmit your wiſdom and humanity, with never-fading luſtre, down to the lateſt period of time. It is not wanted that you ſhould be diſpoſſeſſed of your property, God bleſs you all with it; but that

an *equal* inheritance may be enacted to commence to all the children of the preſent generation, of the landed poſſeſſions of their parents; and that the eldeſt ſon may no longer devour his brethren *. Afford to the many, the means of providing for families, they will then be no longer afraid of contracting; by limiting the quantity of ground allowable for one man to rent and till. Theſe two regulations, with the aid of one or two more, hereafter to be mentioned, will leſſen the extreams of inordinate riches and influence on the one hand, and the correſponding degrees of want and abject miſery on the other. Subjects, the riches of a nation, would then multiply beyond their preſent production, and the land yield an increaſe of proviſions ſuitable to its more minute and careful cultivation.

The voice of nature declares all the deſcendents of the ſame parent to have an equal claim to a ſucceſſion to his poſſeſſions; by the aid of which, with a proper exerciſe of their abilities, they might all be enabled to earn their own living in independence, and bring up children to ſucceed in like manner.

By this means the poſſeſſion of land would be ſecured from being monopolized, and delivered down to poſterity in the ſame inordinate proportions; and would be diſtributed in moderate parcels, and have a tendency ſo to continue. For whatever might be acquired by the happy induſtry of one man, would,

* Perſonal eſtates being more tranſitory in their nature, may be left to the diſcretional diſpoſal of parents; as a ſecurity for the good behaviour of children; that they may make thoſe diſpoſitions of them which circumſtances may dictate.

It is a good hint in the ſcheme for providing for the Poor, lately publiſhed by Mr. Whitworth; that all bequeſts to charitable uſes in land, be ſold; and the money lodged, for the benefit of the Poor, in the funds. If it is pernicious for land to be tied up, it is moſt of all ſo, when veſted to perpetuity in corporate bodies.

when

when he died, be broke again into as many parts as he left children to inherit it; and thus ſerve as foundations for them to build their own ſeparate fortunes on. By this means, inſtead of one man claiming the whole, and his brethren being turned adrift, the attention of ſo many would be fixed to the careful cultivation of their little ſpots, and ſo the number of huſbandmen be increaſed: huſbandmen whoſe intereſt in their land, would prove the beſt ſecurity for their affections to their country. In brief, ſuch a total change would be effected, as would in every particular reverſe what has been ſhewn to reſult from the intailment of eſtates on the eldeſt ſon.

An objection may probably be ſtarted, that throwing inheritances open, would bring them to nothing; for, that an eſtate of a thouſand a year, divided among five ſons, is reduced to two hundred to each; which two hundred divided in the next generation among five more, is farther reduced to forty pounds a year; and this afterward among five again, would be reduced to eight pounds a year; and may thus be brought to ſhillings, and the ſhillings to pence.——Granted: on a ſuppoſition that theſe heirs, like Spaniſh Dons, put on their ſwords and lived idle upon their patrimonies. But, they would be no more liable to come to ſuch impoveriſhment, than the children of thoſe parents, whoſe poſſeſſions not being entailed, deſcend freely at the diſcretion of the teſtators: and who according to their own care and abilities, continue to maintain equal, if not ſuperior ſtations to their anceſtors. The careful cultivation of their land and ſuch articles of trade in the produce of it, which are conſiſtent with rural concerns, may then, as they now do, enable perſons to purchaſe more; and which thoſe who can turn themſelves to better advantage in other profeſſions, will always be ready

to ſell; not to mention additions of ſubſtance by marriage. This fluctuation of property, ſo conducive to a general ſpirit of induſtry, will be of more advantage to a ſtate, than the delivering land down from century to century, to the elder branches of the ſame families.

To the reaſons which may be urged in favour of this argument, let it be added, that ſuch tenures actually obtain in ſeveral places, Kent particularly; where Gavelkind ſubſiſts as a valuable privilege ſecured to them by their antient patriotic bravery againſt William the Norman.

The *neceſſary* departments of ſtate would be filled with men whoſe paternal and acquired property would infuſe ſome probity into them †; whoſe attachment to the government would be corrected by their property as ſubjects, and include an attachment to the welfare of their country. The ſpirit of property and independence would make men ſcorn to gape ſo hungrily after ſervile emoluments, as thoſe muſt do who have no other ſupport: and what would be the conſequences? The numbers of *ſine cure* places, and unmerited penſions, might be retrenched as they became vacant; and a judicious œconomy take place, when the number of deſtitute gentry were reduced, and the obligation to find places for them no longer ſubſiſted. A temporary continuance of our preſent taxes after this, inſtead of barely paying the intereſt, would *raiſe* a fund, not a *ſinking* one, by which in a ſhort time the government might diſcharge the principal of that tre-

† Do not be too haſty, critic, in appealing to thoſe principles ſome men of property manifeſt under the preſent worn out ſyſtem. As the patrimonies of men under the regulations here recommended would be ſmaller, their attention would be turned to agriculture and trade; and the principles they would thus acquire, would not admit a compariſon with thoſe of the ſons of vice and diſſipation.

mendous

mendous debt, which elſe muſt inevitably ſubvert it: and then a reduction of impoſts taking place, would impart new life and vigour to the whole ſyſtem, and make us the ſtrongeſt, happieſt ſtate; in ſhort, render us the glory and envy of the world!

This may be thought to be engaging largely for the ſucceſs of theſe popular regulations. But if ſo plentiful a country as Britain tends to ruin, it muſt be by the influence of wrong management; it is impoſſible for it to be a natural tendency. A fundamental error is pointed out, and its effects are ſhewn to extend far beyond what is commonly imagined: an alteration is hinted; and its contrary tendency neceſſarily follows. This has been curſorily deduced in what reſpects our political ſyſtem in the aggregate view of things; a more intimate examination of its effects remains to be made.

Eſtates being crumbled down to more moderate ſize, the owners of them would find their reſidence *upon them*, more convenient and profitable in all reſpects than meanly dangling after a court dependence, up at the metropolis. Thus the tenants would find the rents paid to their landlords, circulate among them again immediately; and tradeſmen would be enabled to ſettle and live comf rtably in the places of their nativity, and would not be tempted ſo readily to deſert the country and croud up to London in queſt of ſubſiſtence. The country would thus continue full of inhabitants, and peace and plenty diffuſe a general content and chearfulneſs. Nor would London ſuffer: the multiplicity of diverſions and ingenious methods of diſſipation, which owe their exiſtence to ſo great an aggregation of opulent perſons, no otherwiſe engaged than to attend upon them; and which ſeduce the trader from his counting-houſe and ſhop, to his ruin; theſe would indeed receive a check: but trade would receive additional vigour from being leſs confined in

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its ſituation, and being extended more over the face of the country. London would always continue the centre of it, only the mode of it would be ſomewhat changed. The retail trade in town would decline in ſome meaſure, as being more diſperſed over the kingdom; but—the wholeſale trade to ſupply country orders, would greatly enlarge *. Thus would the intercourſe between all parts of the iſland be much increaſed; a greater number of people be employed in the inland carriage; and thus would a greater number of ſeamen be bred and engaged in the navigation of coaſting veſſels.

The accumulation of land being checked, it is plain the number of landholders will be increaſed. Huſbandry would flouriſh in a more extenſive manner, by being more carefully and minutely managed; and of conſequence a greater number be employed in it. Conſidering alſo the aggregate of the people as conſiſting of two grand claſſes, huſbandmen and traders; and agriculture engaging a greater number both as maſters and ſervants; the number of thoſe who apply themſelves to trade and manufactures will of courſe leſſen; the proportion therefore between them will be better adjuſted. The greater the attention beſtowed on agriculture, and the greater the numbers are who cultivate the land, the greater will its produce be; and this produce being brought to market by many proprietors, the firſt price of commodities will be maintained on a reaſonable footing: and our bounteous land will truly

* It will not require much arithmetic to prove that ten families poſſeſſed of one thouſand a year each, or twenty of five hundred a year, would conſume greater quantities of the *uſeful* articles of commerce, than one family poſſeſſing ten thouſand a year, could: and this would be the caſe, ſuppoſing them all to live to the extent of their incomes. For, one family *cannot* conſume ſo many real neceſſaries as ten or twenty can: the remainder therefore circulates among the diſſolute miniſters to their pleaſures, and the corrupters of the public morals.

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merit the character beſtowed on antient Judea, of flowing with milk and honey. Trade and manufactures mean time not being ſo greatly overſtocked with hands, artiſans will not only obtain a more equitable price for their labour, but will be in no danger of ſtarving by lying out of work; inſtances of which occur but too frequently to the burden of thoſe pariſhes where large manufactures are carried on *. Nor will there be any reaſon to apprehend that the price of labour may be enhanced beyond what the articles to be wrought will bear; let corporations be thrown open, let excluſive companies be diſſolved; and all ſuch evils will correct themſelves †.

That policy is admirable, whereby certain idle profligate fellows are protected in inſolent demands and behaviour to their maſters; and are veſted with the power of calling their maſters to account, if they ſeek a remedy by employing more reaſonable, more ſober, more induſtrious journeymen, who are not intitled to the liberty of being ſo, in ſuch particular places! That policy is excellently calculated, which confers a privilege on ſome tradeſmen of charging what they will for their wares; and alſo of puniſhing others who may dare to ſell at a more equitable rate! But theſe reliques of miſtaken antiquity are hardly worth expoſing; ſince ſuch valuable immunities being lo-

* Here the ill policy of centering large manufactures in the metropolis is ſeen; as that of weaving in Spital-fields: where by the vaſt number of indigent manufacturers collected on one ſpot, the fluctuation of buſineſs often occaſions inconceivable diſtreſſes among hundreds of poor dependent wretches unable to turn their hands to other employments.

† That hands are ſometimes ſcarce, and labour exorbitant, are complaints frequently made in many profeſſions. But where are ſuch complaints heard? where but in *corporations*, thoſe deſtructive monopolizing bodies, whoſe members are frequently oppreſſed by their privileges.

tal, towns are in general turned inſide out; their trade having been driven out of their gates, and now ſurrounding their former boundaries.

Excluſive trading companies have a pernicious tendency, more extenſive in its influence than the privileges of corporations. The juriſdictions of the latter are exerciſed only within a few acres of ground, which are partly cured by new inhabitants ſettling without the walls: but the authority veſted in trading companies extends to the whole Britiſh dominions; and by the excluſive right of carrying on particular branches of commerce, not only debar other of his majeſty's ſubjects from participation; but affect the *whole nation* by making them pay arbitrary prices for what, by trade being thrown open, might be procured at much more equitable rates.

Suppoſing theſe errors to be corrected, there is ſomething more yet remains to be done, before we can be ſaid to be eſtabliſhed upon a wholeſome plan. It is abſolutely neceſſary to prevent any one order of the people from acquiring an undue aſcendency or advantage over another: and as power is well known to follow property, another point is therefore to be adverted to.

The landholder and trader are two perſons widely different in circumſtances; the poſſeſſions of the former are limited, and are improveable only to a certain degree; the trade of the latter is fluctuating, and where ſucceſs attends it, as money breeds money, there is no aſſigning the progreſs of its extenſion. That traders, therefore, may not grow to a degree of opulence which may give them too great an advantage over the owners and renters of land, and enable them to ſwallow up each other, it is prudent that ſome barrier ſhould be framed, which giving them all the opportunity which good citizens would wiſh to enjoy, may check a too rapid

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courſe of trade*, and ſpirit of monopoly in individuals, and afford others room and opportunity to exert themſelves, and to reap that ſhare of buſineſs, which their own aſſiduity may entitle them to. Under this head may be included the renting farmer†, whoſe capital, like the tradeſman's conſiſts in money, and who, by an inordinate deſire of carrying all before him, may be inclined to take all the farms in his neighbourhood into his own hands.

The farmer is eaſily curbed in his wholeſale undertakings, by the legiſlature enacting, that no perſon either directly or indirectly ſhall rent more than acres of land. By which means room will be afforded for a riſing number of huſbandmen, who according to the preſent ſyſtem, as few ſmall farms are to be had, are forced to live in ſervitude all their lives, and at laſt find a refuge for a deſtitute old age in a pariſh workhouſe.

How to preſcribe bounds to the inordinate extention of private trade, is now the queſtion; as

* What! ſays the critic, check trade! is that the way to make Great-Britain flouriſh? Softly friend, there is ſome difference between reſtraining individuals within reaſonable bounds, and checking the national commerce. The former tends to multiply traders and to keep the price of commodities low; the only means to ſecure foreign markets.

† It is in the opinion of the preſent writer no ſmall advantage to this argument, that the ſuffrage of an ingenious lawyer of the preſent time, can be produced in its favour. The accurate editor of the late quarto edition of the Statutes at Large, thus expreſſes himſelf in the preface to the laſt volume, concerning the famous Stat. 4. H. 7. c. 19. inflicting penalty for the decaying of houſes of huſbandry.

'It is ſubmitted to public conſideration, whether ſome proviſion is not requiſite *at this time*, to prevent the engroſſing of large farms into one hand: for though it may be more for the preſent eaſe and benefit of the landlord to have one overgrown opulent tenant, than to have ſeveral of moderate circumſtances; yet ſuch a monopolizing of farms ſeems to have a manifeſt tendency to depopulate the kingdom.' Pref. Vol. 9. p. 7. n.

there is no aſcertaining the capitals engaged in it, nor the credit which may be taken up and added to it. Yet there ſeems to be a method to check the growth of monopolies in it, at leaſt with regard to home manufactures, which is more immediately to our purpoſe. If the farmer can raiſe no more grain than a limited number of acres can produce, a tradeſman can carry on no more buſineſs than a limited number of ſervants can execute. Therefore by a judicious limitation of the number of journeymen and manufacturers which a maſter may employ, his buſineſs is reſtricted. This in the wiſdom of the legiſlature may be accommodated to particular profeſſions, if it ſhall appear, that to maintain an equitable balance, ſome require a greater allowance or reſtriction than a general limitation will expreſs. Thus without any juſtifiable cauſe of complaint, trade would be thrown open, and opportunity afforded for enterprizing induſtrious men to engage in buſineſs on their own account, by only eſtabliſhing a gentle curb to the inordinate purſuits of ſuch individuals as know no bounds to their deſires.

A proviſion being thus ſuppoſed to be eſtabliſhed againſt the contraction of property into few hands, by which the acquiſition of it will be facilitated; one more expedient preſents itſelf for raiſing a great number of induſtrious huſbandmen, and affording means of ſubſiſtence to thouſands of the riſing generation, without interfering with the poſſeſſions of any one.

It is well known what vaſt tracts of common and waſte land we abound with in all parts of the Kingdom, which though they lie uncultivated and neglected, might be converted to a valuable account as the frequent acts paſſed for encloſing them fully teſtify.

There could not be a more profitable application of theſe lands, than for the legiſlature to grant parcels of them at their diſcretion, as portions to poor girls marrying in the reſpective pariſhes where they lie*. By this reſource a number of young beginners would be lifted up into ſome degree of property, and a production of neceſſaries commence, in a proportion far beyond what now exiſts; which by their plenty and cheapneſs would force their way into foreign markets; and our iſland might become a general magazine of ſupply for all Europe.

But we now have forgot the ſubject we firſt ſet out with, which was the *miſerable Poor*; and it was high time to forget them: for the diffuſion of property thus ſecured, would inſpire ſuch a general ſpirit of induſtry†, that no one poſſeſſing their natural abilities would be in danger of wanting the neceſſaries of life; and this was the point aimed at. Whatever ſyſtem of policy, whatever form of government, has not this ſalutary tendency; is not calculated for the welfare of the people, but for the ſiniſter emolument of thoſe who ſhare the adminiſtration; and like all tranſactions from wrong principles, muſt inevitably end in a general ruin.

It has been already remarked, that a univerſal equality is not pleaded for; nor have the hints here offered, any ſuch tendency. The point aimed at is to leſſen the extremes of opulency and miſery; the latter of which, being the conſequence of the

* The waſte lands in England which are improveable, have been computed at three millions of acres: allowing therefore 10 acres to a couple, 300,000 might thus be portioned out.

† A *Work-houſe*, or *Houſe of Induſtry*, in the very expreſſion involves an abſurdity; ſince he who can work in one of theſe pariſh receptacles, for the emolument of the farmer of the Poor; would labour to a much better purpoſe for his own maintenance and profit, did the ſyſtem of policy afford him opportunity.

former, that application which has in the ſeveral ſchemes offered to the legiſlature, being directed ſolely to the *effect*, is here carried up to the *cauſe*; *the locking up property by law.* Under the propoſed regulations there would, nevertheleſs, always be people enough ready to tranſact the ſubordinate offices of life; there will always be people without property, without talents to acquire any, and without conduct to keep even what they have: and of theſe latter the proverb will be fulfilled, *He that will not look after his own buſineſs, will be obliged to look after that of other people.*

If inſtead of *ſalus* POPULI *ſuprema lex*, we are to corrupt the ſentiment and text, by reading *ſalus* FAMILIARUM; and that the upholding particular families in their hereditary dignity and opulence muſt ſtand in competition with the general good; it would be a great point gained if the entail on the eldeſt born, for the maintenance of the family name and ſtation, were limited to *half* the landed inheritance. By this means the innocent younger children might ſtill have ſomething to ſhew for their parentage; ſomething therewith to combat the difficulties of life, ſomething to lay a foundation for an honeſt ſubſiſtence, and to ſet them above the fear of want, above a proſtitution of their faculties to ignoble purpoſes; to the ruin of a country, which indeed as things are conſtituted at preſent, they have little cauſe to venerate. An obligation would alſo be laid on the ſaid eldeſt ſon, in proportion to his pride, (which would thus be turned into a profitable channel) to apply himſelf aſſiduouſly to the improvement of his patrimony, inſtead of diſſipating, and alienating, with reſpect to himſelf, poſſeſſions obtained by an unnatural privilege; as ſoon as he comes to them. If this were done, though but half a remedy, its good conſequences would be ſoon evident; great families might then intermarry among

among each other as much as they pleaſed, the country would not be greatly hurt by ſuch unions: while an experience of the public good flowing from ſuch a partition of patrimony, would induce the next generation to be wiſe enough to re-eſtabliſh a general gavelkind, and throw the doors of inheritance wide open to all a man's equal progeny.

The plan here ſuggeſted, might cauſe ſeveral alterations in our interior policy not adverted to; nor is it thought material to trace them: the fundamental principles being ſhewn to be wholeſome, *mutatis mutandis*, all ſubordinate conſequences will correct themſelves as they occur; and knit together an equitable, ſtrong, and durable conſtitution.

Moſt of the diſſertations wrote upon ſubjects relating to civil ſociety, whether politics or ethics, are calculated for, and have for their objects, men who are eaſy in their fortunes and ſituations, and who have leiſure for diſcuſſion; and when we call ourſelves a free people, people of opulence only are intended: all below, are out of the queſtion, though they may be the greater number. It is thus the Poles boaſt of their freedom; but who is it are free? Why the grandees, a ſet of haughty tyrants, who have the *liberty* to enſlave and tyrannize over the peaſants. However much it may be inſiſted on, that opulent families are the ſupport of government; it will be found on ſtrict examination, that not only the government, but thoſe noble families alſo, are ſupported by the *middling people:* Theſe are the bulwark of the nation; theſe are the men to whom the conſtitution owed its preſervation, when *bigotry* and *tyranny* menaced its overthrow: and theſe are the men on whom upon any future occaſion we can only ſafely place our reliance. To talk of *liberty* without including the idea of *property*, is either impoſing on ourſelves, or thoſe we ſpeak to; for that only is a free country, where all orders of the

people

people by the opportunity of an eaſy acquiſition and ſecure enjoyment of PROPERTY, in *effect* as well as in *ſound*, taſte that ſweetner of all difficulties, that beſt jewel of human life, LIBERTY.

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N. B. Since the writing the foregoing tract, Mr. Dalrymple's *Conſiderations upon the Policy of Entails in Great-Britain*, came to the writer's hand. It is pleaſant to ſee what different concluſions may be drawn from the ſame premiſes; and in ſome few inſtances it might poſſibly be ſuppoſed that alluſions to paſſages in Mr. Dalrymple's tract were intended in this; tho' the truth is, his pamphlet had not then come to knowledge. At firſt it was intended to make ſome ſupplemental obſervations on the *general* principles advanced by that gentleman; for his *particular* reference is to the ſubject of Entails in Scotland; for the meridian of which kingdom it is indeed more peculiarly calculated, than for that of England; although it is extended to both: but on farther conſideration this was omitted. Mr. Dalrymple has obtained a reſpectable name in literature, and not undeſervedly; the preſent writer neither is, nor deſires to be, known: but authorities apart, theſe two pamphlets are both in the hands of the public, who will form their own judgments on the merits of a point which ſo intimately concerns them.

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